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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Thursday, September 9, 1937.

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SEP 13 1937

U. S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

MR. SALISBURY:

Here we are in Washington. And as usual on Thursdays Ruth Van Deman and Roy Hendrickson are on hand to report facts fathered by their respective bureaus - Home Economics and Agricultural Economics. Ruth, I think we'll let you lead off with reports on the economics of the home.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Very well, Morse. But I'd like to begin on the economics of the home in a very lowly form - watermelon pickles - - -

MR. SALISBURY:

Watermelon pickles! Nothing lowly about them. I'll take my home economics in the form of watermelon pickles any day.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

(I thought so.) You've shown so much enthusiasm even at the mention of a recipe for watermelon pickles, I brought you a sample of some I made at home over the weekend.

MR. SALISBURY:

You really mean it --- these are for me?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Of course. Don't look so surprised. Didn't you think I could make watermelon pickles?

MR. SALISBURY:

Certainly. I'm not surprised at that. I'm surprised you'll let me have any so early in the season. From childhood on down I've observed that the watermelon pickles don't come off the shelves until late in the fall.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

There are exceptions to every rule.

MR. SALISBURY:

It's my good fortune to be in on one of them. Say, Ruth, these look swell. Back in the old college days we called the kind of watermelon pickles we got "rhinoceros hide."

MISS VAN DEMAN:

So dark, you mean, and hard?

MR. SALISBURY:

Tough was the word. But these now, these are light colored, and clear, not all shriveled up. How do you get them that way?

(over)

MISS VAN DEMAN:

That's simple enough. I soak the rind in limewater first. That's what makes it crisp. Then I cook it in fresh water and drain it. Then I cook it some more with the vinegar, and sugar, and spice. I just follow Mrs. Yeatman's recipe in the leaflet on "Homemade Pickles and Relishes."

MR. SALISBURY:

I remember now. Jo mentioned that leaflet on "Homemade Pickles and Relishes" this summer. Any copies of it left for late pickle makers?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Makers of late pickles, you mean.

MR. SALISBURY:

That would sound better.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, there's still a good supply of the leaflet "Homemade Pickles and Relishes." Also the Department has a bulletin on "Making Fermented Pickles." That goes into the question of brining and dilling and so on, very thoroughly, and tells some of the reasons for failures as well as for success in making pickles.

MR. SALISBURY:

And I should think a very good bulletin to consult if there are still cucumbers in the garden.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes. It's the best thing I know on the subject of fermented pickles. Now, Morse, if you'll lend me your aid as you did last week, we'll hold another round table.

MR. SALISBURY:

Gladly. Will this be another one on canning?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

No, on preserves, and conserves, and jams this time.

MR. SALISBURY:

That's right. The big crops of pears, and grapes, and late peaches this year, must be bringing you lots of questions about preserves. Ruth, may I exercise my privilege as questioner right here at the start?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Certainly, Morse. You represent the ultimate consumer.

MR. SALISBURY:

Not the ultimate in consumers, I hope.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Well, I don't know about that. But what's your question?

MR. SALISBURY:

I'd like to know what's the difference between a preserve, and a conserve, and a jam, if that's a fitting question.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Entirely fitting. And one we get very often. Of course, preserves, and conserves, and jams are all very sweet products, made with anywhere from a half to equal quantities of sugar to fresh fruit. The difference comes chiefly in the way the fruit is handled. In preserves, the aim is to keep the fruit whole or in large pieces. So the fruit is generally cooked slowly with the sugar or sirup until it becomes rather clear and translucent. Then it's stored with the thick rich juice around it in the jars.

MR. SALISBURY:

I see. Then you can hold up a jar of fruit preserves and see the individual pieces of fruit floating in a thick rich sirup.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes. Except of course with fruits like Damson plums that are so dark in color they never let the light through juice or pulp.

MR. SALISBURY:

O. K. I think I've got the definition of a preserve clear in my mind. Now how does a conserve differ from a preserve?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

For a conserve, the fruit is crushed, either just before or just after it's combined with the sugar. A conserve is much like a jam in texture - smooth and thick. And generally it's a mixture of fruits, including lemon or orange. And there are often nut meats in a conserve. Mrs. Yeatman makes a most delicious one with Concord grapes, and orange, and chopped nuts added just at the last.

MR. SALISBURY:

That listens good to me. Almost as good as watermelon pickles.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Morse, you're insatiable. I'll give you a copy of Mrs. Yeatman's recipe and let you conserve your own.

MR. SALISBURY:

You're taking considerable for granted, lady. Is that recipe in a separate leaflet from the pickles?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, it's in the companion leaflet to the Pickles and Relishes. This one's called "Fruit Jellies, Preserves, Jams, Marmalades, Conserves, and Butters." Some day I hope we're going to have all these directions for making pickles and preserves and jellies in printed form, like the canning bulletin. But Mrs. Yeatman and Mabel Stienbarger want to be sure of every single detail before they go into print.

MR. SALISBURY:

How about jumping the gun on them, and you going ahead and giving the high spots in technique now.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Surely, there's no harm in that. There's so much fruit this year, and I understand the quality is exceptionally good. It will probably be a record year for putting fruit up at home as well as in the commercial plants.

Of course the first high spot in making any of these products is the choice of the fruit itself. You need high quality fruit to stand the cooking and long storage. The quality of the fruit at the start has more to do with the quality of the finished product than many people realize.

For making preserves fruits should be at the firm ripe stage. Not the soft ripe. The softer fruit is better for jams, and conserves, and butters.

And to make perfect preserves the fruit should be uniform in size, or cut into uniform pieces. That allows it to cook evenly in the sugar sirup.

Another thing, it's better to weigh the fruit and the sugar than to measure it. The old adage "a pint's a pound the world around" doesn't hold when you're making preserves from quinces, or peaches, or fruit like that which doesn't pack closely into a measure. But a pound of peaches to a pound of sugar will give the same results time and time again.

Then, also, you generally get a better product if you handle not more than 6 or 8 pounds of fruit at a time. I know it's a temptation sometimes to get the biggest kettle you can lay your hands on and fill it brimful of fruit and sugar and make a whole lot of preserves at once. But that way you have to boil and boil them to get the sirup rich and thick. And you're quite likely to overcook the fruit, and make it dark colored and strong in flavor. The modern taste for preserves seems to be in favor of those that have more of the natural flavor and color of the fresh fruit.

With some of the firm fruits like quinces the trick is to get them tender and yet have them thoroughly impregnated with the sugar sirup. If you put that kind of a fruit into a very heavy, rich sirup right at the start, it will shrivel up and become tough. And the longer you cook it, the harder and tougher it will get. To prevent that, some of the old recipes for quince preserves used to call for steaming or parboiling before combining with the sugar. But that sacrificed some of the good quince flavor.

The people down in our laboratory have found that you can make tender, delicious quince preserves by using a very thin sirup at the start. For each pound of the pared, sliced quinces, they make up a sirup with $3/4$ of a pound of sugar and $1-3/4$ cups of water. As soon as that sirup comes to the boil, they drop the fruit in, and let it cook slowly for an hour to an hour and a half. By that time the quince has turned that beautiful deep pink color, and the juice is ready to form a jelly. But, Morse, I'm embarrassed.

MR. SALISBURY:

What's up?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Time's up. And I've forgotten all about this being a round table and that pile of questions over there. I've been holding the floor here all by myself.

MR. SALISBURY:

That's all right. I've never yet been to a round table where that doesn't happen. And as for these letters, with or without your permission I'm going to read part of this one on top of the pile. It comes from Brownville, Florida, and

the writer says: "Miss Van Deman: I enjoy all your talks on cooking, canning, or anything pertaining to homemaking, for that is my business and I want to be one of the best."

MISS VAN DEMAN:

That's very nice of her. I'm sure she is "one of the best." And I hope if she tries her hand at preserves this fall - probably they will be guava preserves down there in Florida - anyway I hope they'll be "of the best."

MR. SALISBURY:

Thank you, Ruth. We'll be expecting you next week with more information for the homemakers of the Farm and Home Hour."

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